

(2) *Puduvai* lands should be granted to poor natives of the taluk in small lots of 5 or 10 acres.

(3) A preliminary enquiry should be conducted in regard to every *puduvai* application to see whether the applicant had effected improvements on the lands applied for.

(4) Lands within Reserves suitable for cultivation should be disafforested and registered in the names of poor persons.

(5) A uniform rate of *tharavila* for *puduvai* lands should be fixed for the whole State and no discretion should be allowed to the Revenue officers to fix the rate of *tharavila*.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

9. Policy of Government in the matter of the disposal of Government land.

Mr. P. K. Narayana Pillai B. A., B. L. (Member, T. I. C., Kottayam) said that the recent events of the Brander murder and the shooting tragedy at Nedumangad had brought the question of land policy to the unusually large and prominent attention of Government and the people. According to the legislative definitions given of 'Government land,' there were three varieties (*Vide* section 3 of Regulation IV of 1091). The first was land over which no other rights except that of Government existed and to which no manner of obligations was annexed, and as an example he quoted Government waste lands. The second variety was land reserved for communal or public purposes and the third was unassigned lands of incorporated Devaswoms. He then explained how, in his interpretation of the existing *Puduvai* Rules, they worked unsatisfactorily and proceeded to consider the restrictions and lines on which Government should dispose of land under its control. The modern theory was that lands belonging to the State were not the property either of the Sovereign or of the subjects exclusively and that the latter had some concurrent rights in State-lands. It was in acceptance of that principle that many of the colonies thought fit to put ring-fences round their State-land to keep back the foreign elements. Other people had also been actuated by the same principle of self-interest. Travancore too seemed to have respected the above doctrine till a few years ago and a notification prohibiting Europeans and Americans from acquiring land in the State used to be published annually in the *English Almanac and Directory*; but it had ceased to appear in the recent issues of that publication. Though the *Puduvai* Rules conceded preferential claims to His Highness' subjects, such a declaration had not been of much practical avail to meet the situation. The Member's contention was that none but His Highness' subjects should be allowed to hold land in Travancore. If any foreigner wanted land, he should first swear allegiance to His Highness' Throne as a subject. To alienate land in favour of foreigners was a violation of the rights of the subjects and it brought in its train several difficulties—both political and administrative. The foreigners claimed immunity from local laws and regulations which bound all subjects of the State. Another serious evil was that foreign capitalists entered into keen competition with the natives to the distinct disadvantage of the latter. As a result of such admittedly unequal competition, the economic condition of the country had become crippled and diminished. The Member quoted Lord Selborne who in advocating a new land policy for England observed thus:—"We want to see the greatest possible number living on the land. We want to see the agricultural labourer assured of a good wage, of a good house and a good garden. More than that, we want to see him assured of the prospect of becoming a cultivator of the land himself and eventually an owner. We want in fact an agricultural ladder which will enable a man to rise on the land just as he can rise in any other walk of life." The land policy of the State should, he said, be actuated by such a spirit. The usual ground on which lands were being registered, *viz.*, that they were unoccupied, was not a safe procedure, as the argument of the Member was that there was no land which might be said to be absolutely evacuated. The adoption of the principle that the people could be evicted by Government was hardly consistent with the theory of Hindu States which was, according to Manu, that he who entered on

a piece of waste land and cleared it for cultivation was the owner of that land. The Mahomedan rulers of India had also recognised the force of that theory in practice. But, it was probably too late in the day to go back to the days of Manu. The Member's second contention was that the existing Puduval Rules were extremely faulty. He referred to the Pattom Proclamation of 1040 and doubted whether under it aliens could acquire rights of permanent occupancy in Government lands and observed that anything more than *Pandarapattom* tenure should not be created under the rules. He also suggested that the rules should be put into a legislative enactment clearly indicating the policy underlying the same. In conclusion, the Member pleaded for open public enquiries being held in the matter of registration of *puduvals* and put in a strong plea for prompt completion of such enquiries and for practical effect being given to the rule granting preferential rights to natives over foreigners whenever lands were registered.

Mr. P. A. Abraham B. A., B. L. (Member, Kottayam taluk) complained of *puduval* grievances and of the manner in which waste lands were being registered in such taluks as Muvattupuzha, Thodupuzha and Kunnatnad. His chief point was that the people were not being given access to the records connected with *puduval* enquiries. The newspapers were full of complaints and alleged abuse of powers by the Revenue officers. The appointment of a Committee to go into such matters was suggested. The launching of several companies for bringing land under some kind of cultivation or other was a sign of the awakening of the people to a growing demand for land. Another matter dealt with by the Member was the long delay in the disposal of *puduval* applications. The intention of Government to have marshy lands suitable for paddy cultivation in the Forest Reserves excised and thrown open for registry was not being carried out because of the opposition of the Forest Officers. *Inter alia* the Member observed that, in view of the good pioneering work done by the European planters, he was in favour of giving waste lands to them. The fixing of *tharavila* was, he said, being arbitrarily done and was a fruitful source of hardship to the ryot. In northern taluks what was done was to sub-divide lands in such a way as to bring their disposal under the jurisdiction of the local Revenue officials. Sometimes unfair competition was engendered with motives not altogether just or commendable. The practice of auctioning waste lands and giving them to the highest bidder was not consistent with the declared land policy of Government which was to promote the ryots' good. Finally, the Member said that prohibitory assessment was being realised without any information being given to the party concerned, the fact being known only when steps were taken to realise the amount. Such a procedure landed the State also in pecuniary loss, besides involving it in litigation.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

10. Grant of additional lands for extension of estates.

Mr. R. Ross (Member, South Travancore Planters' Association) said that firewood in some estates was getting extremely scarce and was a necessity for both tea and rubber. In the Ponmudi District most of the estates had been under cultivation for the last 50 years and fuel had been almost exhausted. The forest land applied for was in many cases both unworkable and useless in so far as the Forest Department was concerned. He requested that such lands wanted by Planters might be granted on reasonable terms for fuel purposes as well as for extensions in tea and other products.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

11. Reduction of *tharavila* on *puduval* lands in the Devicolam Division with a view to extend cultivation on the hills.

Mr. C. A. Meera Rowther (Member, Nominated) submitted that the high rate of *tharavila* on *puduval* lands in the Devicolam Division, *viz*, Rs. 25 per acre, was a source of discouragement to people applying for registry of lands in that Division. Consequently, most of the lands which could have been brought under cultivation were allowed to lie waste. The destruction of crops by wild beasts, the unhealthiness of the locality and the heavy cost of cultivation rendered the grant of special